

CLAIMS:

1. A power management system for electrical and electronic apparatus having a number of components which may be switched to a low power state, comprising a power controller coupled to each component in the apparatus and a plurality of power modules, each associated with a component, wherein each power module is coupled to the power controller for each component its associated component makes use of, and sends signals to that power controller indicating whether or not its associated component wishes to make use of the component coupled to that power controller, and the power controller switches its component to a low or high power state in dependence on the received signals.

2. A power management system according to claim 1 in which a power controller switches its component to a low power state if none of the signals from power modules indicate that other components require its component.

3. A power management system according to claim 1 or 2 in which switching to a low power state by a power controller takes place after a predetermined delay and a re-examination of the status of the signals from the power modules.

4. A power management system according to claim 1, 2 or 3 in which monitoring of input signals by the power controller takes place after switching to a low power state, and the component is switched to a high power state if one of the input signals from the power modules indicates that another component wishes to make use of it.

5. A power management system according to any one of the preceding claims including a system timer to schedule predetermined switches between low and high power states.

6. A power management system according to claim 5 in which the system timer only causes a component to switch to a low power state in the absence of any contradictory signals from power modules.

7. A power management system according to claims 5 or 6 in which the system timer only causes the component to switch to a low power state if the time interval until the next scheduled high power state exceeds a predetermined limit.

8. A power management system according to any preceding claim in which at least one power controller is provided integrally with a power module wherein that power controller can receive signals from other power modules and the power module can send out signals to other power controllers indicating whether its associated component wishes to make use of any other components.

9. A power controller for managing the power supplied to an article of electrical or electronic apparatus comprising means for causing the apparatus to switch between a low power and a high power state, means for receiving signals from other components which wish to communicate with the apparatus, means for monitoring the status of these signals, wherein the means for switching the apparatus between the low power and the high power state does so in dependence on the received signals.

10. A method for managing the power supply to an article of electrical and electronic apparatus comprising the steps of receiving signals from other components that wish to communicate with the article of electrical and electronic apparatus, monitoring the status of these received signals, and switching the apparatus between a low power and a high power state, in dependence on the status of the received signals.

11. A power controller according to claim 9 wherein the apparatus is switched to the low power state when the received signals indicate that no components wish to communicate with it.

12. A power controller according to claim 9 or 10 wherein the apparatus is a part of a network.